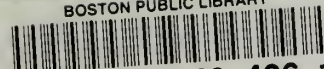


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# FENWAY-KENMORE

DISTRICT PROFILE AND PROPOSED 1979-1981  
NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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City of Boston  
Kevin H. White, *Mayor*

Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Neighborhood Planning Program

1979

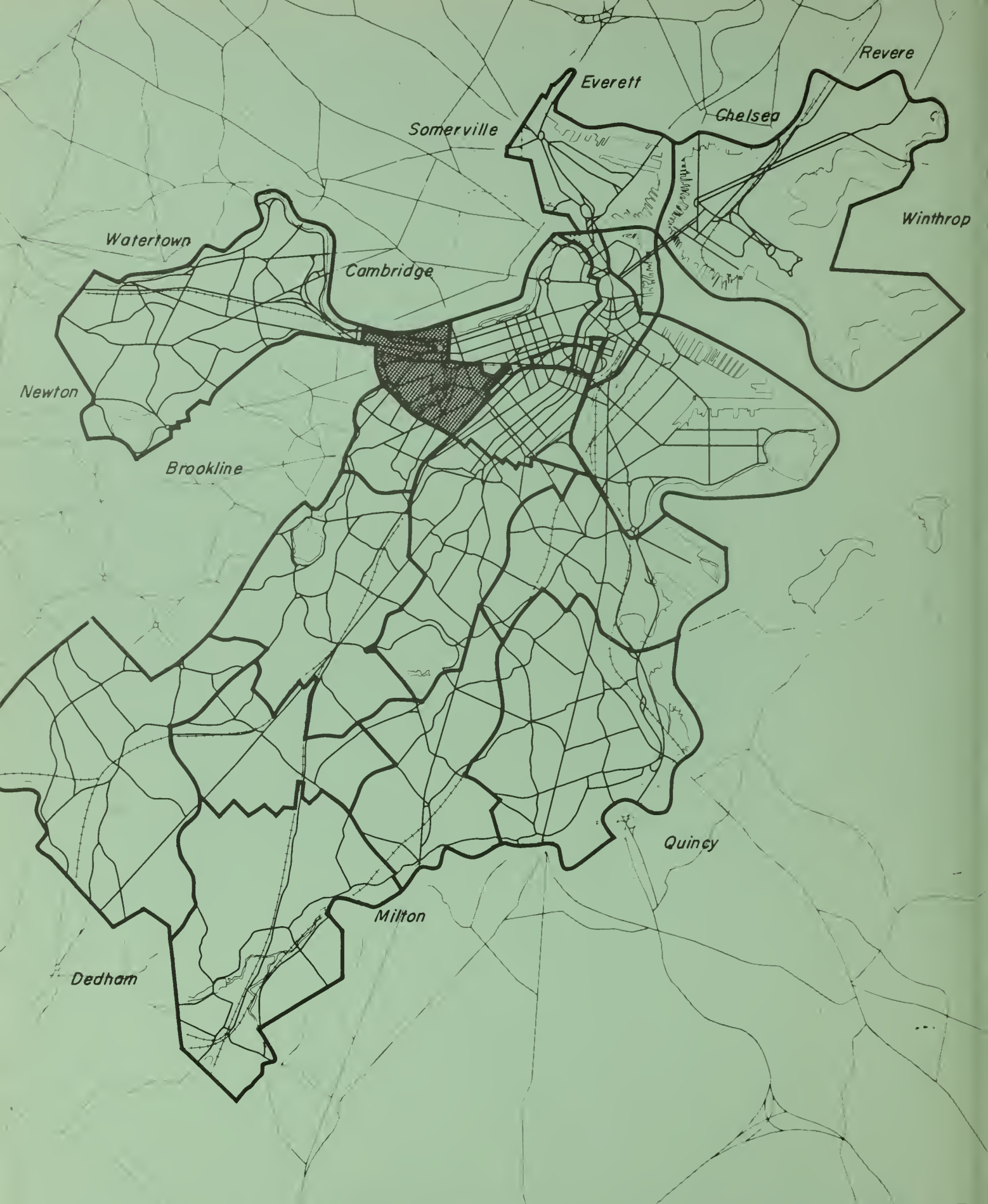
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FENWAY / KENMORE



*The Neighborhood Planning Program of the Boston Redevelopment Authority has prepared this report to assist area residents, City departments and others in the development of a comprehensive neighborhood improvement program.*

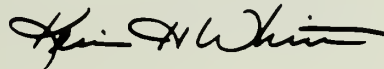
*Over the past ten years, over \$50 million of City, state and federal funds have been spent in Fenway-Kenmore on public improvements, primarily within the urban renewal area. A major focus has been the provision of housing funds which has resulted in private renovation and construction of over 1,200 apartment units.*

*In the next three years, completion of the Urban Renewal Plan, revitalization of the area's housing stock and three business districts, and park improvements are major priorities for City funding.*

*Due to limited City funding capabilities, we must use our limited funds efficiently and attract greater Federal and private investments. The information and recommendations contained in this report assist both City Hall and the neighborhood to determine how we can best utilize our limited resources.*

*The success of this administration's efforts to revitalize the Fenway-Kenmore area depends upon full participation of area residents, institutions and businesses in the planning of City investments. I urge you to study the recommendations contained in this document and participate in the decisions ahead of us.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kevin H. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "White" clearly distinguishable.

Kevin H. White  
Mayor

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
I. INTRODUCTION/ SUMMARY .....	3
II. DISTRICT PROFILE.....	5
A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY.....	5
B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS ....	5
1. Fenway-Kenmore District .....	7
2. Kenmore .....	7
3. West Fens.....	7
4. Fenway.....	9
C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVEST- MENT (1968-1977).....	9
D. 1978 PUBLIC INVEST- MENT PROGRAM.....	14
III. PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY .....	16
A. RESIDENTIAL AREA UNCERTAINTIES.....	16
B. COMMERCIAL AREAS .....	18
1. Kenmore Square.....	18
2. Upper Boylston Street .....	19
C. OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT AND ACCESS.....	19
D. DISPOSITION OF URBAN RENEWAL PARCELS .....	20
E. TRAFFIC AND PARKING .....	21
F. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION.....	23
G. HUMAN SERVICES.....	23
IV. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED THREE-YEAR IMPROVE- MENT PROGRAM (1979-1981) .....	24
V. APPENDICES.....	27
A. 1975-1977 NEIGHBOR- HOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM STATUS.....	27
B. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES.....	27



## I. Introduction/Summary

The Fenway was the last of Boston's neighborhoods constructed on filled land. Institutions, attracted by Olmsted's park in the Fens, began to locate in the area in the 1890's. The first of the area's institutions, the Christian Science Church, was constructed in 1894. The Massachusetts Historical Society, Symphony Hall, the Boston Medical Society, Horticultural Hall, the New England Conservatory, Simmons College and the Isabella Stuart Gardner residence, now a museum, were constructed in the 1890's and early 1900's.

Today, many additional institutions including Boston University and Northeastern are located in the area. The first townhouses in the area were constructed in the Seven Streets Area simultaneously with institutional development. Apartment houses began to be constructed after World War I.

Total population in Fenway-Kenmore has declined only slightly (-3%) since 1960. However, the population aged 15 to 24 doubled during this period and now constitutes approximately 60% of the population. Transiency in the area is high; only 21% of the 1970 population were in their same housing units five years earlier.

The majority of the area's 10,600 housing units are predominantly in brick or stone, multi-unit structures constructed approximately 50 years ago. The district has the highest percentage of persons living in group



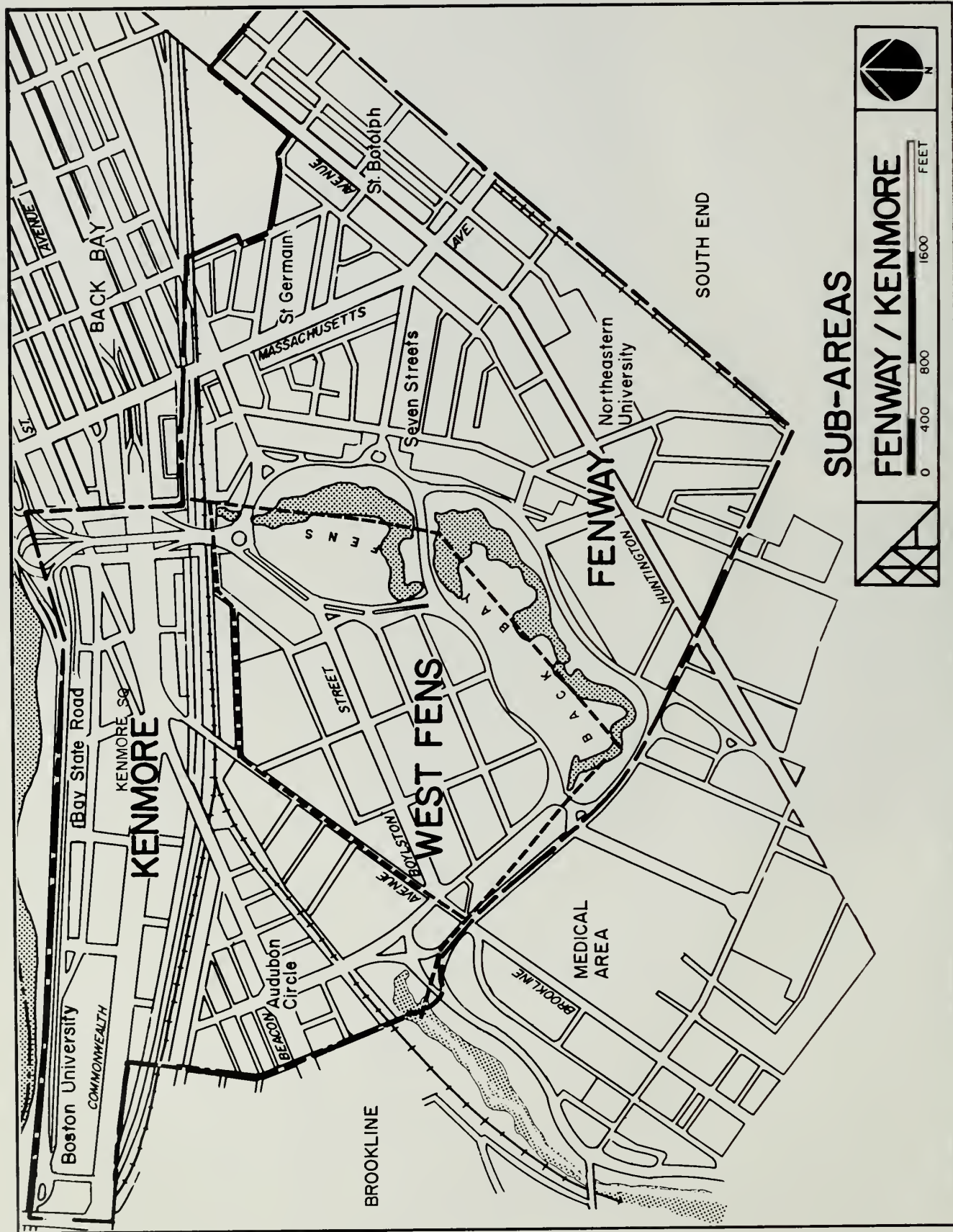
• *St. Botolph Street.*

quarters (36%) in the City. Owner-occupancy is rare as only 2% of the total units (31% of the occupied one-nine unit structures) are owner-occupied.

During the last ten years, investment has been concentrated within the Fenway urban renewal area. Nearly 42 million dollars in federal, state and local funds have been expended for public improvements. The area's other neighborhoods also received considerable public investment in the last ten years. Street resurfacing, street reconstruction, lighting, tree planting and sewer work have occurred in the West Fens, Audubon Circle and St. Botolph Street neighborhoods.

During the next three years, the City must continue to address the area's major issues, i.e., housing, commercial area revitalization, open space improvements, disposition of urban renewal parcels, traffic and parking, and institutional expansion.

As the City is faced with continuing fiscal limitations, the City must focus its resources in order to leverage private, state and federal resources to accomplish major neighborhood objectives.





## II. District Profile

### A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

One century ago, the problems of the Fenway-Kenmore area — then referred to in City annals as “virtually an unusable asset” — prompted the formation of the Boston Park Commission. The group was charged with both developing a park system for the City and solving the drainage difficulties of the Back Bay Fens, a notorious collector of sewage, swamp water and flood runoff of nearby rivers. Not until Frederick Law Olmsted was called on to review the situation three years later were both objectives accomplished in a single scheme.

According to his recommendations, tidal gates for the Muddy River and Stony Brook were constructed, a sewage interceptor was buried in the Fens basin, and fill was placed around the conduit to create a public park. Olmsted's ingenious solution led to renewed residential and commercial development in Boston and to the westward expansion of the City. By 1920, the former mud flats along the Fens were filled completely with land, with the Fens dividing the Kenmore Square portion to the north and west from the Fenway part to the south and east.

Together with the park, two other factors were instrumental in the early development of the area: advances in mass transit and a major downtown fire. Horsecar lines, appearing around 1855, replaced the omnibus, and electric cars further improved service three decades later. Through various linkages, Kenmore Square and lower Huntington Avenue became particularly accessible by public transportation as well as by automobile on newly constructed streets and bridges. Meanwhile, the Boston Fire of 1872 led such institutions as the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Christian Science Church and the Boston Symphony Orchestra to settle near the Fens instead of the downtown in the late 1800's.

The Fenway-Kenmore area continued to attract various institutions — educational, cultural, medical and social — of national and local importance. Nearby, apartment buildings were constructed early this century,



*The Christian Science Church, constructed in 1894, was the first institution to locate in the Fenway.*

joining the brownstone and brick residences of the Symphony and Ruggles neighborhoods. These speculator-built apartment houses varied in quality of construction and, subsequently, in their maintenance. The slow deterioration typical of intown housing and commercial conditions during the late 1950's and early 1960's, together with the expansion needs of the Christian Science Church, led to the formation of a renewal plan by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1965.

Intending to rejuvenate the area through both large-scale reconstruction and improvements to existing neighborhoods and facilities, the Fenway Urban Renewal Project concentrated its initial activities in the vicinity of the Christian Science complex. It eventually erupted into a controversy of certain residents versus planned redevelopment, with a lawsuit in the early 1970's delaying new construction and project improvements, and providing for the formation of the Fenway Project Area Committee (FenPAC), a citizen advisory group.

The portion of the district to the north and west of the Fens experienced another sort of development and

decline in the century following Olmsted's improvements to the area. Kenmore Square had existed prior to the redesign of the Fens as an annex of the downtown characterized by fine hotels, shops and professional offices. Wealthy families moved into townhouses on Bay State Road around the turn of the century, and the Peterborough and Audubon Circle areas were built up with large apartment structures by speculative developers in ensuing decades.

Just south of the square, a light industrial and wholesale district flourished. The fibre of these sections has changed greatly in the past 30 years because of the dominance of Boston University and other colleges over the area, the placement of highway and railroad lines and a major sports facility (Fenway Park), and the change in locational preferences of offices and manufacturing facilities.

### B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

The information in this report on population and housing conditions was derived from the 1970 United States Census. Since the boundaries of the Fenway-Kenmore District differ from those of Census tracts, estimation was necessary in calculating some statistics. Due to Census tracts having been redrawn from 1960 to 1970, reliable data comparisons were impractical on any smaller scale than the full district.

Another qualification to be kept in mind in examining the 1970 statistics is that half the district is an urban renewal area. Thus, because of site clearance and planned construction or rehabilitation, both demographic trends and housing conditions are affected by more than “normal” market forces, and the relevancy of the 1970 Census data might be less than for other districts.

Three subareas, each with distinguishing characteristics, have been delineated for the purpose of analysis in this report: Fenway, Kenmore and West Fens. Fenway is the portion of the district lying to the south and east of the Fens, including the Seven Streets, St. Botolph, and St. Germain Streets neighborhoods. Kenmore includes Kenmore Square and the Bay State Road and Audubon Circle

# COMPARATIVE STATISTICS — FENWAY/KENMORE

Population	Kenmore	West Fens	Fenway	District	City
Total 1970	8,620	4,301	12,252	25,173	639,803
Change from 1960*				- 3%	- 7%
Black 1970	264	143	1,355	1,762	104,429
% of 1970 total	3%	3%	11%	7%	16%
% of 1960 total*				7%	9%
Aged 15-19 1970	3,362	239	2,900	6,501	60,900
% of 1970 total	39%	6%	24%	26%	10%
% of 1960 total*				12%	9%
Aged 20-24 1970	3,659	1,253	3,485	8,397	76,958
% of 1970 total	42%	29%	28%	33%	12%
% of 1960 total*				18%	11%
Aged 65 + 1970	296	652	1,785	2,733	81,437
% of 1970 total	3%	15%	15%	11%	13%
% of 1960 total*				15%	12%
<b>Income</b>					
Median Family	\$7,283-\$9,565	\$7,283	\$4,647-\$8,250	\$7,283	\$ 9,133
Median Individual	\$1,066-\$3,427	\$3,427	\$ 984-\$3,036	\$2,126	\$ 2,189
% Families under \$5,000	26%	30%	31%	30%	22%
<b>Household Patterns</b>					
Total Households	1,845	2,684	5,272	9,801	217,622
Family Households	345	706	1,209	2,260	140,966
% of total	19%	26%	23%	23%	65%
Non-Family Households	1,500	1,978	4,063	7,541	76,656
% of total	81%	74%	77%	77%	35%
Persons in group qtrs.	5,456	176	3,385	9,017	39,346
% of total population	63%	4%	28%	36%	6%
% Population in same unit 5 + years*	8%	30%	26%	21%	50%
<b>Housing</b>					
Total Units	1,958	2,779	5,857	10,594	232,400
Owner-occupied units	94	5	133	232	59,178
% of total	5%	0%	2%	2%	26%
Renter-occupied units	1,751	2,679	5,139	9,569	158,257
% of total	89%	96%	88%	90%	68%
Vacant units	133	95	585	793	14,966
% of total	6%	3%	10%	8%	6%
% of Total Units in:					
single unit structures	5%	1%	2%	2%	15%
2-9 unit structures	34%	1%	28%	23%	62%
10 + unit structures	61%	98%	70%	75%	23%
Units needing \$1,000 fix-up* +				34%	29%
Market Condition +	Stable	Uncertain	Stable	Stable	Stable

\* Reliable data available only for district and city.

+ Data source is BRA Research Department.



residential areas. West Fens refers to the neighborhood just north and west of the Fens.

## **1. Fenway-Kenmore District**

### **a. Population and Income Characteristics**

The Fenway-Kenmore population is characterized chiefly by its young age, its low incomes and its high transiency. Because the district is the site of so many educational institutions, its population is dominated by persons in the 15 to 24 age groups. Since 1960, the percentage of these groups — which now constitute 60% of the district's residents — has doubled, while the proportion of all other age groups has declined. The area's total population of about 25,000 has declined slightly (—3%), while the City's has decreased by 7% from 1960 to 1970.

Median incomes for families and for individuals are below City medians, and 30% of the families in Fenway-Kenmore earn less than \$5,000 a year, compared with 22% for all of Boston. Transiency is another notable characteristic: only 21% of the 1970 population were in their same housing units five years earlier, versus 50% for the City.

### **b. Condition of Housing and Need**

Most of the housing stock in the district is brick or stone multi-unit structures, built about a half century ago. By either measure of density — persons per acre or housing units per acre — Fenway-Kenmore is significantly more built-up than the City as a whole. Three-quarters of the district's housing units are in buildings containing ten or more units, contrasted with one-fourth of the City.

The district has the highest percentage of persons living in group quarters 36% (versus Boston's 5%); and even disregarding this dormitory influence, there are nearly twice as many one-person, non-group units in Fenway-Kenmore as citywide. Vacancy rates parallel those of Boston, but a greater proportion of the housing is in rental units. Owner occupancy is rare: 2% of the total units (31% of the occupied one-to-nine unit structures) compared with City figures of 26%.

## **2. Kenmore**

The Kenmore sub-area includes Kenmore Square itself, Boston University, and two residential neighborhoods — Bay State Road and Audubon Circle. Kenmore Square is a major vehicular traffic and transit node and a commercial district of citywide importance. In the past, the Square was a center for fine hotels. Today, many of these hotels are used as dormitories by educational institutions; and the predominance of students is reflected in the Square's many retail stores, restaurants and nightclubs.

Bay State Road is a lovely, tree-lined street of well-kept brick and brown-stone rowhouses. Although Boston University currently occupies a number of these rowhouses as well as a few dormitories, the street is basically residential, punctuated by the offices of a few doctors who also live in the neighborhood. Audubon Circle, near the Brookline border, is inhabited by students and young professionals as well as some families. Large apartment buildings predominate on main streets, with smaller structures elsewhere.

The Kenmore sub-area, saturated more than any other section of Boston by the student influence, is populated primarily by young people attending nearby Boston University and Grahm Junior College. Persons aged 15 to 24 comprise over 80% of the population. Few families live in the subarea, and just 3% of the residents are elderly. The median family and median individual incomes are slightly below the City figures, and 26% of the families earn less than \$5,000 a year.

Group quartering exists throughout the subarea, providing housing for 63% of the population, in contrast with the City figure of 5% and the district's 36%. Although the density of the Kenmore sub-area is twice that of Boston, much of the land use is nonresidential. Educational institutions own considerable property; Fenway Park occupies land near the Square; commercial structures and undeveloped lots prevail along Boylston Street and Brookline Avenue.

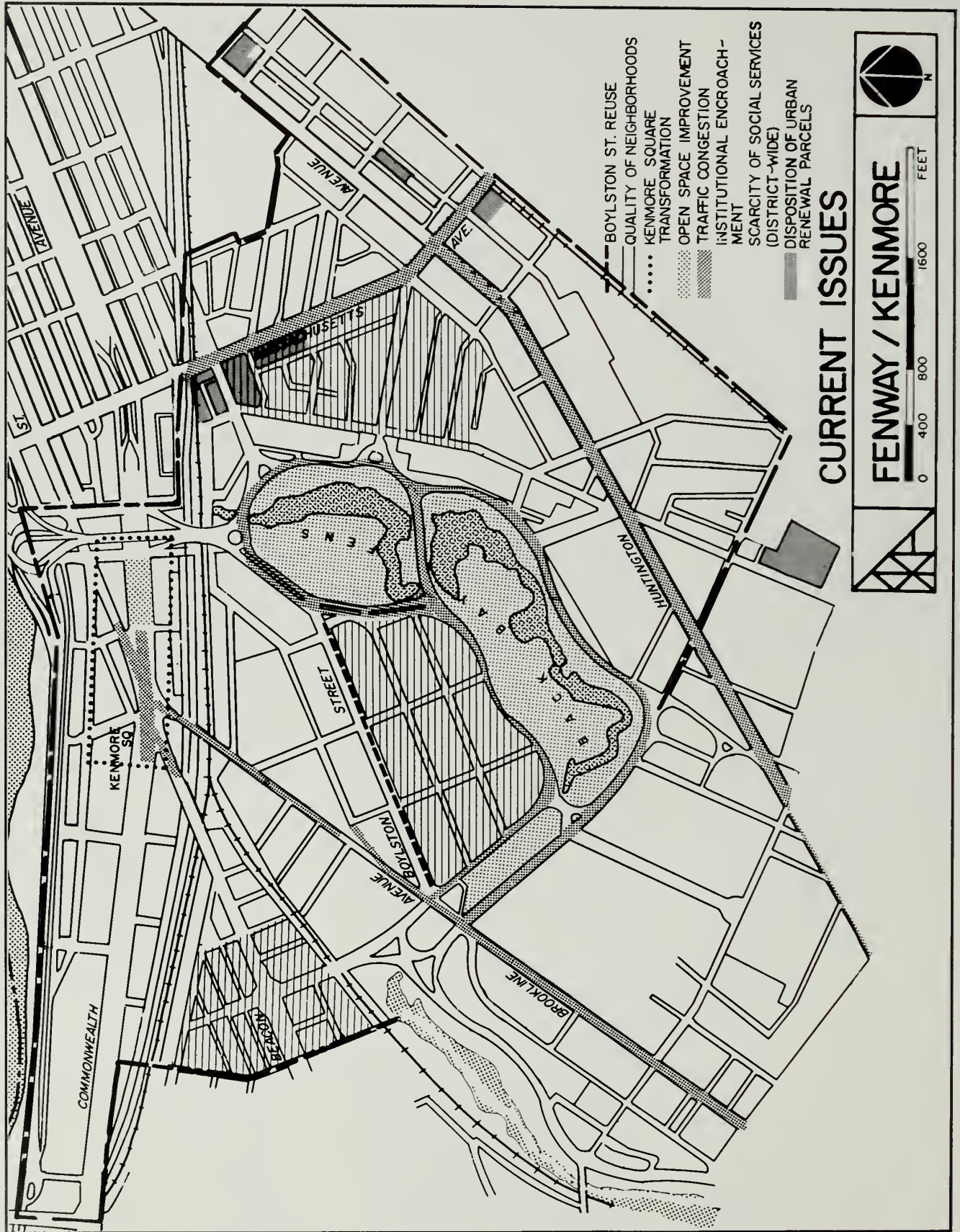
## **3. West Fens**

The population characteristics of the 4,300 residents in the West Fens area are somewhat more similar to those of the City than are those of the rest of the Fenway-Kenmore district. While the 20 to 24 age group constitutes a high proportion (29%) of the population, 15 to 19 year olds account for only 6% of the total, in contrast to the district figure of 24% and the City figure of 10%. There is less student dominance, with group quarters accommodating only 4% of the residents.

The community is chiefly one of young working people — attracted to the area because of proximity to the Fens, downtown and cultural facilities and its moderate rents — and of elderly residents (15%), many of whom have lived in the neighborhood all their adult lives. There is a higher percentage of families in West Fens than elsewhere in the district; their median income figure is lower than Boston's and a greater proportion earn less than \$5,000 a year. Unrelated individuals nonetheless account for most of the total population, and they have a median income somewhat higher than the City figure.

Housing in this densely developed section has been an issue of citywide notoriety over the past decade. The stock consists almost entirely of large apartment buildings constructed about 50 years ago. About one-fourth of the 2,779 units have been under single ownership, passing from one absentee landlord to another and deteriorating rapidly in the process. Although efforts are underway by tenants and developers to achieve proper rehabilitation and management of these buildings, the vacancy rate is high, the market is askew and some structures have been unoccupied for over two years.

Two major adjacent land uses also have had negative impacts on the livability of the area and on the potential for residential stability: (1) the uncertain fate of the section of Boylston Street from the Fens to Brookline Avenue; and (2) Fenway Park, which contributes traffic, safety and sanitation problems to the neighborhood.







*Museum of Fine Arts.*

#### 4. Fenway

The Fenway sub-area includes three distinct residential areas (Seven Streets, St. Botolph, and St. Germain Street area). Commercial strips are located along Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues, and there are a number of major institutions (Northeastern University, Christian Science Church, Symphony Hall, Museum of Fine Arts and Wentworth Institute among them).

The Seven Streets neighborhood is bounded by the Fens, Massachusetts Avenue, Huntington Avenue and Forsyth Street. Housing varies from street to street in both type and condition, ranging from large apartment buildings in deteriorated condition to well-kept rowhouses. Notwithstanding the obvious effects of real estate speculation, recent fires and the intrusion of Northeastern University and related uses, Seven Streets is struggling to establish and maintain itself as a stable, residential neighborhood. In an effort to see this become a reality, a special housing program is being developed to begin to address the housing needs in the Fenway. This program will provide interest reduction grants to property owners with complexes of 5 or more units. It will be complemented by an Exterior Code Enforcement Program which will attempt to clean up existing streets and alleyways.

The St. Botolph neighborhood, situated between Huntington Avenue and the railroad tracks, has gone through a period of deterioration and has been revitalized through extensive private rehabilitation. This area has once again become a desirable, stable residential neighborhood of mid-rise rowhouses and apartment buildings. In the wake of this revitalization condominium conversion is beginning.

The St. Germain Street area is literally in the shadow of the Christian Science Church and Prudential complexes across Massachusetts Avenue from the Seven Streets neighborhood. This area has less of a "neighborhood" feeling than Seven Streets and St. Botolph, because of the heavy mixture of institutional uses with residences. However, with the recent rehabilitation of St. Germain Street this is beginning to change. Further improvements have also begun on Bellvedere Street and are scheduled for Clearway Street. The continuation of these public and private efforts is helping to promote a new sense of neighborhood in this area.

The entire Fenway sub-area, with the exception of St. Botolph neighborhood, falls within the boundaries of the Fenway Urban Renewal Project. With the growth of area colleges, Fenway has acquired a great proportion (52%) of persons aged 15 to 24. The combination of students and urban renewal activity has squeezed many former older, low income residents out of the rental housing market. Accommodations for such persons are being provided in the new Symphony Plaza housing underway at the corner of Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues. There are few families in the area. Almost 30% of the population lives in group quarters, and over three-fourths of the area's households are comprised of one person or unrelated individuals. Viewed in relation to the City and the district as a whole, incomes in the Fenway are low and transiency is high.

The majority of the Fenway's housing stock is in non-owner-occupied, multi-unit structures. Because of the extraordinary costs and red tape involved in applying the Urban Renewal Rehabilitation Assistance Program ("312" loans at a low 3% interest rate) to buildings of more than 5 units, this program has not been much help in upgrading residential property in the Fenway. Similarly, the Housing Improvement Program, with its focus on small (up to 6 units), owner-occupied buildings, has not been used much in the area.

Thus, with a young and transient population, minimal maintenance, and little public assistance, the Fen-



*St. Germain Street.*

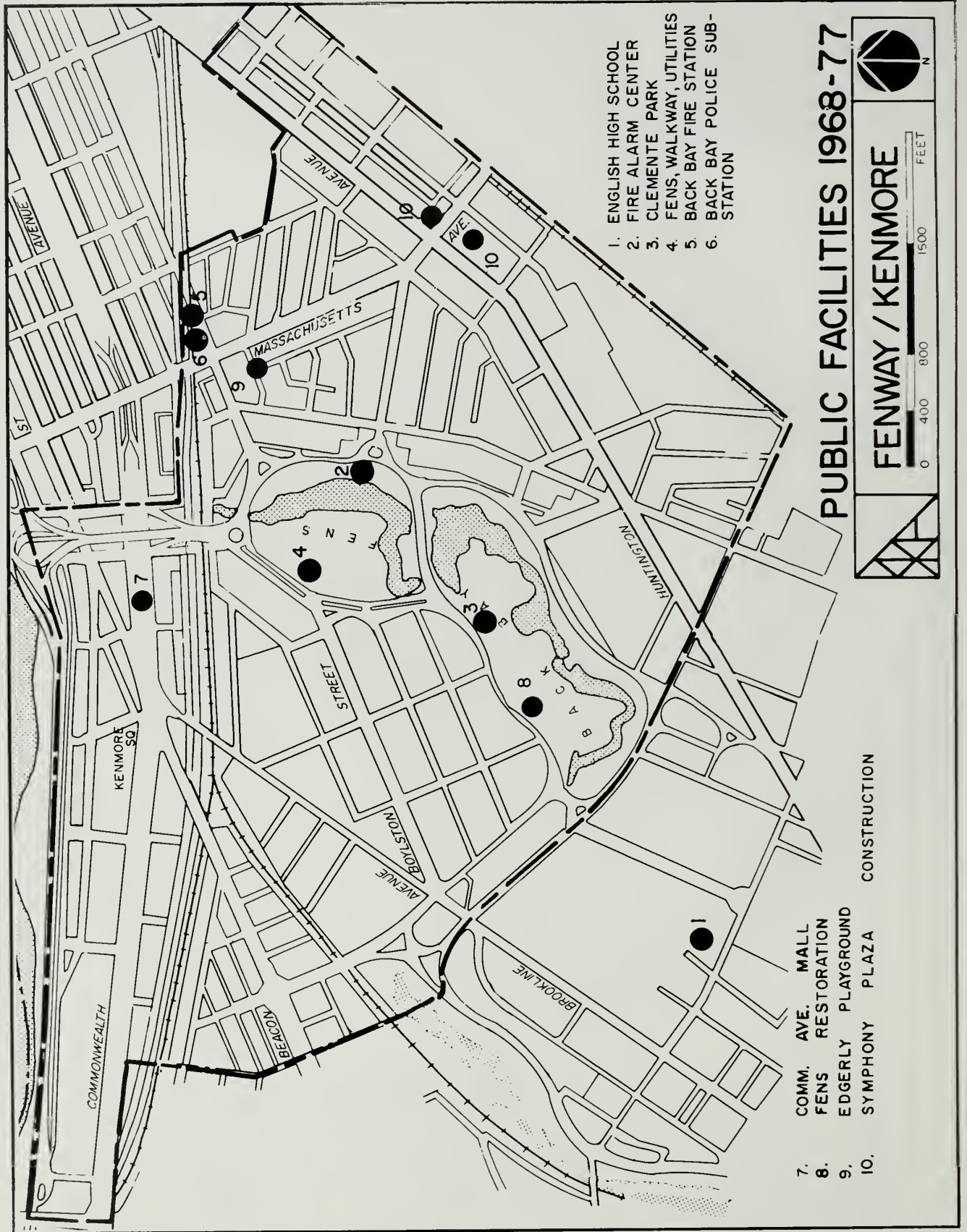
way's housing stock has continued to deteriorate. The implementation however of the Interest-Reduction Program (see Housing Issue) is a step towards answering the unique housing needs of the Fenway. Because of other public improvements which are being made, however, and the large financial investment of the Christian Science Church; certain neighborhoods (such as Seven Streets and St. Botolph) are beginning to show signs of improvement, and others now offer new housing (Church Park, etc.).

#### C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT (1968-1977)

Public investment in the Fenway has been concentrated within the Urban Renewal Project. Since the project's inception in 1967, \$17 million in Federal urban renewal funds, \$14.7 million in local funds, including institutional credits, and \$10.5 million in Community Development funds have been expended. The major thrust of this investment was to improve the total environmental quality of the district. Public monies were spent to provide public improvements such as streets, sewers, sidewalks, street lighting, tree planting and pedestrian amenities including neckdowns and corner parks. This investment has complemented the new construction and rehabilitation activities undertaken by the private sector including Church Park, Morville House, Burbank Gardens, Norway Housing, Burbank Apartments and Symphony Towers East and West.

Substantial expenditure has also gone into the district's open space and recreational areas. A three phase master plan for landscape restoration of the Back Bay Fens is underway, with Phase 1 already completed.





1. ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL
2. FIRE ALARM CENTER
3. CLEMENTE PARK
4. FENS, WALKWAY, UTILITIES
5. BACK BAY FIRE STATION
6. BACK BAY POLICE SUB-STATION

## PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968-77



## FENWAY / KENMORE

7. COMM. AVE. MALL
8. FENS RESTORATION
9. EDGERLY PLAYGROUND
10. SYMPHONY PLAZA CONSTRUCTION

Other efforts include the construction of Morville Park and the Roberto Clemente playing fields, the upgrading of the Edgerly Road Playground, and the installation of planters through the Birthday Book Program in front of the Burbank Apartments on Edgerly Road.

Major traffic improvements have been implemented in this area in the past few years. The traffic signal system along Massachusetts Avenue was modernized and synchronized through the TOPICS Program in 1975. Reconstruction has also taken place on Huntington Avenue to

Gainsborough Street with plans to continue as far as Brigham Circle.

Public effort in housing has been in the form of new construction, rehabilitation and leased housing. The Church Park apartments in the Christian Science complex have provided for 508 units, including 127 subsidized for low-income persons and 50 for moderate-income individuals. Also in the renewal project, Morville House has provided 74 low-income and 73 moderate-income units for the elderly. Through rehabilitation, the nearby Burbank Gardens contain 13 low-income and 15 moderate-income

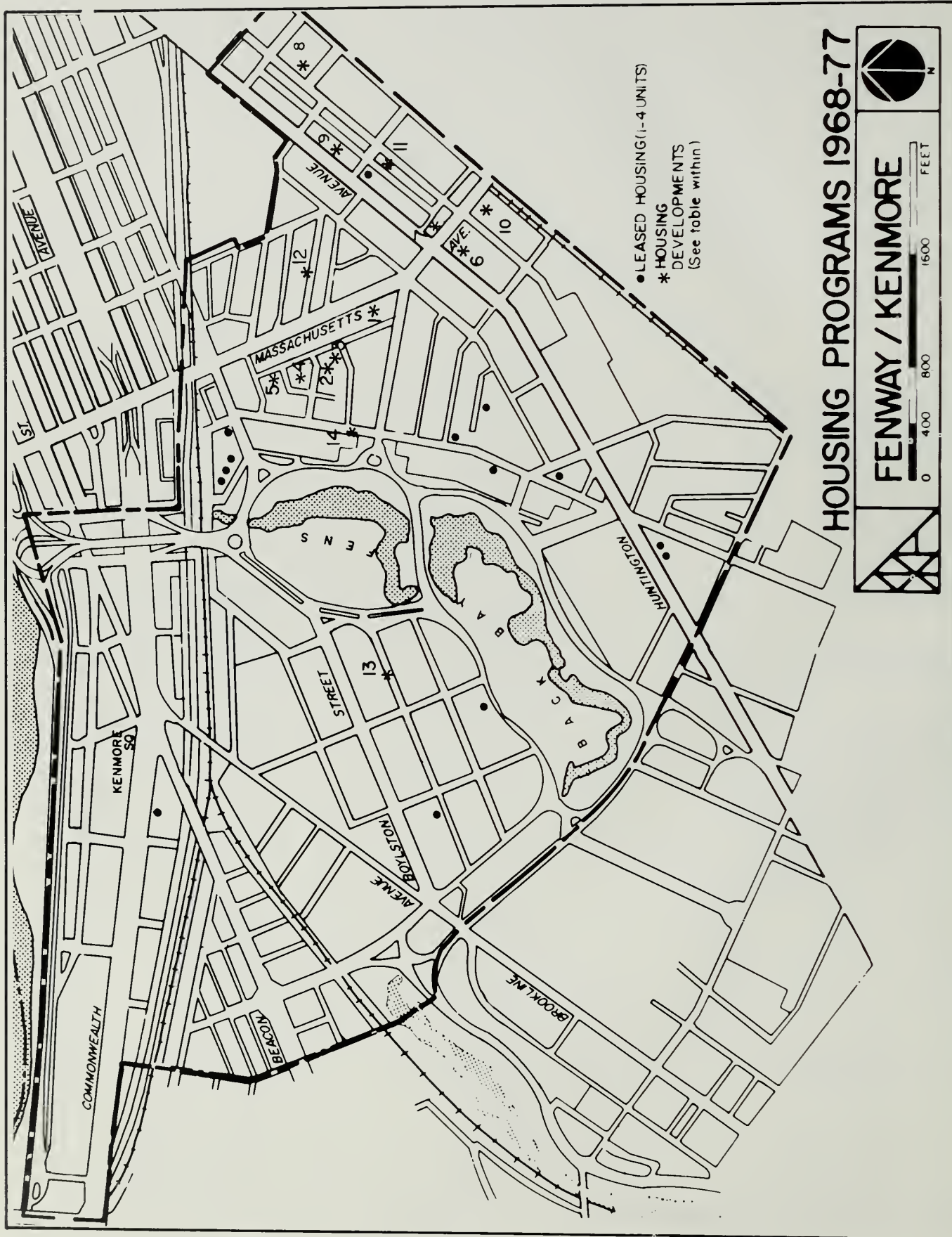
apartments in its total of 52. Also rehabilitated were Norway Housing, providing 75 low-income units and 27 moderate rentals among its 136 units, and the Burbank Apartments, where 34 of the 173 units are subsidized. Individual units of leased housing are scattered in residential buildings throughout the district. Last year, for the first time, the Housing Improvement Program was open to Fenway/Kenmore residents. \$70,000 was allocated to provide 20% and 40% rebates on improvements to licensed, owner-occupied lodging houses of twelve or fewer units in the district.

### HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS 1968-1977

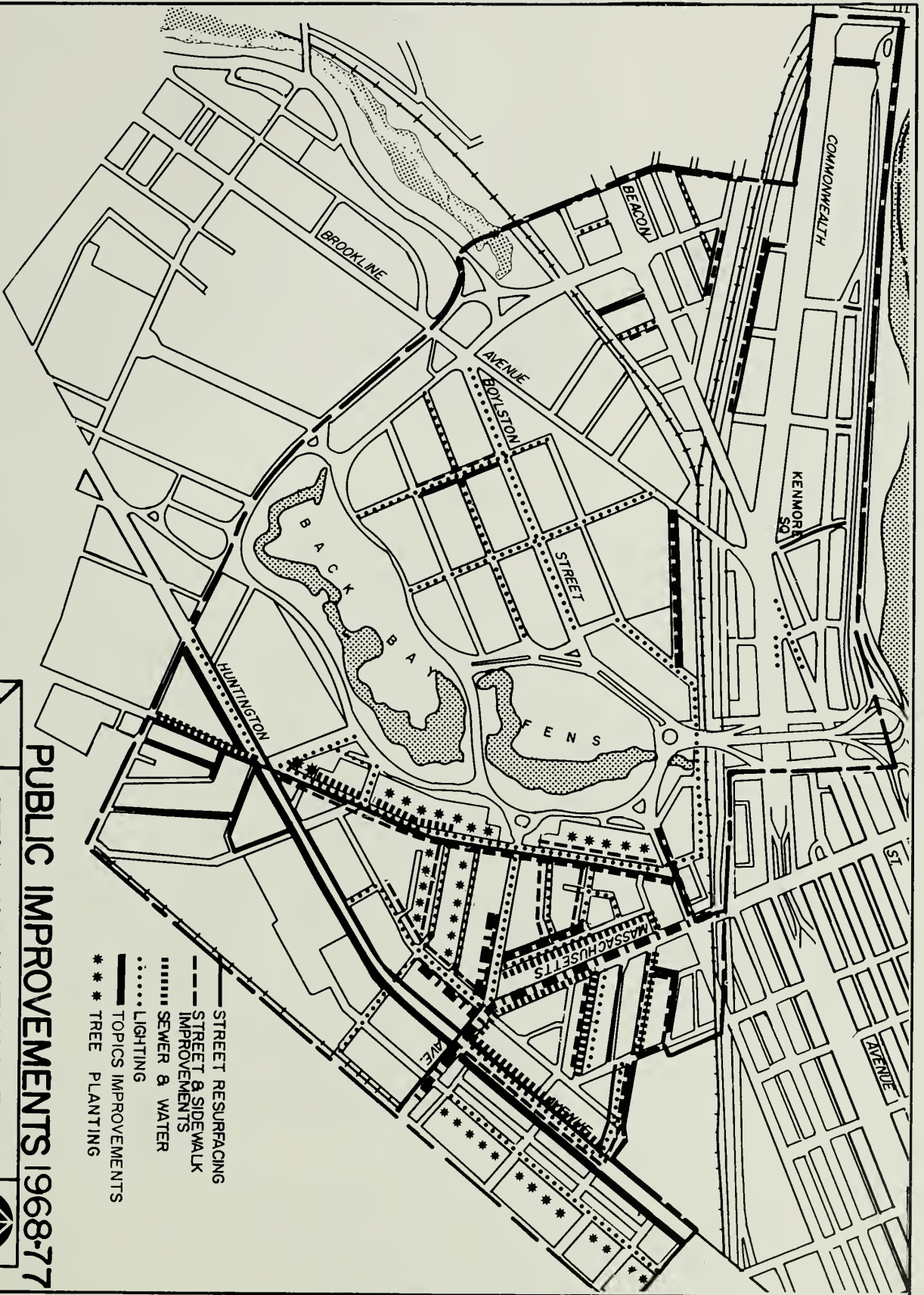
Development and Address	Apartment & Rent Levels*	Category
1) Church Park 221 Massachusetts Avenue	Total: 508 Low: 127 Moderate: 50	Section 8 new
2) Morville House 106 Norway Street	Total: 147 (elderly) Low: 74 Moderate: 73	Section 8 existing
3) Burbank Gardens 31-41 Burbank Street	Total: 52 Low: 13 Moderate: 15	MHFA rehab Sec. 23 Sec. 13A
4) Norway Housing 99-103 Norway Street	Total: 136 Low: 75 Moderate: 27	Section 8 rehab
5) Burbank Apartments Edgerly Road	Total: 173 Low: 34	HUD 221D(3) rehab Section 8
6) Symphony Plaza West** Massachusetts Avenue at Huntington Avenue (Parcel 5)	Total: 173 (elderly) Low: 43	Section 8 new
7) Symphony Plaza East** Massachusetts Avenue at Huntington Avenue (Parcel 9)	Total: 201	Section 8 new
8) St. Botolph Street Elderly Housing	Total: 134 (elderly) Low: 134	New
9) The Green House (Parcel 3) Huntington Avenue (proposed)	Total: 306 Market	Private new
10) St. Botolph Terrace Apartments 351-357 Mass. Avenue (Parcel 7)	Total: 52 Low: 52	Rehab
11) Perkins School (Parcel 4) St. Botolph Street	16 condominiums Market	Private conversion
12) St. Germain Street	Low: 9	Section 8 rehab
13) Peterborough Housing	Low: 220	Section 8 rehab
14) Hemenway Apartments	Low: 183	Section 8 rehab

\* Income levels according to Federal definitions.

\*\* Under construction.







**FENWAY / KENMORE**

0 400 800 1600 FEET

**PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1968-77**

In recent years, the City has funded the elderly van and business district footpatrol programs. Both programs are scheduled to continue during the following year. Two years ago money was also provided for an elderly outreach program (Area II Home Care). Urban renewal money has financed the staff and operation of FenPAC, the neighborhood planning group which advises the BRA and the City on the expenditure of funds and implementation of plans within the urban renewal project area.

The most dramatic examples of private investment in the district over the past eight years have been made with Federal assistance offered through the Urban Renewal Program. They include the Christian Science Church complex, Symphony Plazas East and West (twin elderly and moderate income apartment towers now under construction at the intersection of Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues), and the completed units of newly constructed and rehabilitated housing mentioned earlier (Church Park, Morville House, Burbank Gardens, Norway Housing and Burbank Apartments). Public improvements to the streets and sidewalks were scheduled to coincide with the completion of the housing developments.

Other private investment in the area includes the rehabilitation of individual rowhouses and apartments in the St. Botolph neighborhood, the conversion of a parking garage to residential units at 12 Stoneholm Street, the St. Germain Street rehab, the rehabilitation by a community development group of apartments next to the Massachusetts Historical Commission on Hemenway Street, and the investment of concerned residents' time and money to set up the Edgerly Road Playground on vacant land owned by the BRA.

Boston University has invested in tree planting and landscape improvements within its campus and in nearby areas. Northeastern University has constructed two new buildings on its campus and has recently acquired a fire-damaged building on Huntington Avenue across from the Museum of Fine Arts to rehabilitate for student housing.

Public improvements have also oc-



*Huntington Avenue Improvements.*

curred in neighborhoods outside the renewal area: street resurfacing and reconstruction, street lighting, tree planting and sewer and water work have occurred in the West Fens, Audubon Circle and St. Botolph neighborhoods. In addition the Fire Department's new central alarm control system was constructed and the Fenway Municipal Building was renovated.

The Federal Urban Systems Program has funded the Huntington Avenue improvement project from Gainsborough Street to Brigham Circle. The project includes traffic signalization, roadway adjustments, tree planting, sidewalk reconstruction and other improvements for the safety and beautification of the MBTA median.

#### **D. 1978 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM**

The 1978 public investment program continues and complements activities initiated under the Urban Renewal Program.

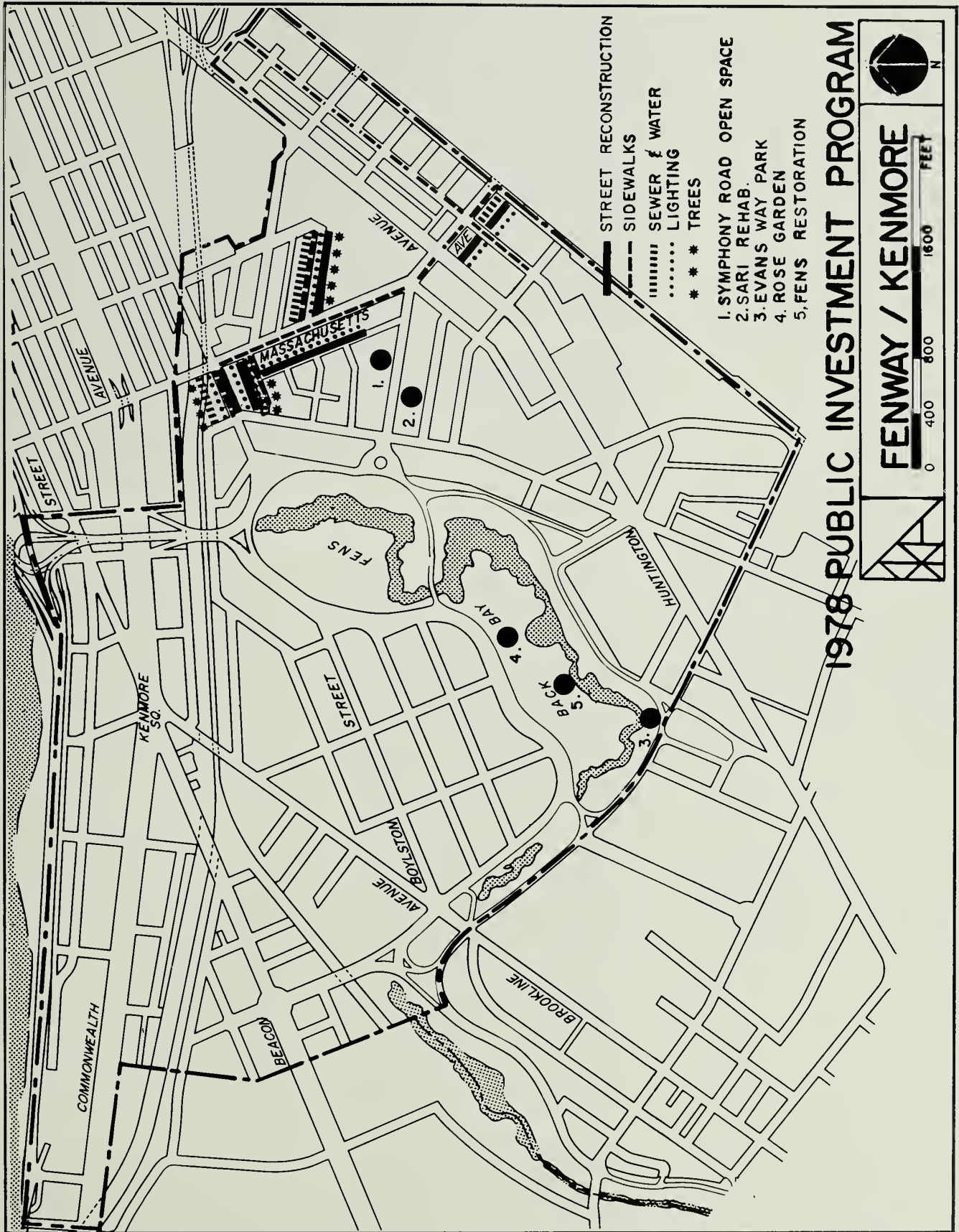
The Symphony Road area is the focus of special attention as public improvements will be used to supplement and stimulate private investment. The BRA will acquire two properties on Symphony, one of which will be demolished. This site will be cleaned and developed as open space. The City has filed an applica-

tion with HUD for a 312 demonstration program in the Symphony Road area. Buildings will be rehabilitated by the Symphony Area Renaissance, Inc., a locally-controlled community development corporation. Total cost of the program is \$400,000. The rehabilitation of 20 units under this program should stimulate private rehabilitation of other units on Symphony Road. To support the housing and physical improvements, a security patrol has been funded for the Symphony Road and St. Botolph neighborhoods.

A special housing program, the multi-unit demonstration program, has been funded (\$200,000) to encourage and facilitate the rehabilitation of large absentee-owned apartment buildings. This program will be complemented by an extensive exterior code enforcement program (\$25,000).

In addition, continued improvements to the district's streets, sidewalks, alleys and parks will be undertaken. Lighting, funded at \$177,000, is scheduled for Evans Park, Rose







### III. Proposed Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy

Eight major issues facing the Fenway-Kenmore district are described briefly in this section. The problems often are interrelated and their solutions complex, involving both public and private initiative. Despite the challenge, however, this area has an enormous potential — because of its location, existing amenities and generally solid though deteriorating housing stock — to become a more viable urban community and a major asset to the City.

#### A. RESIDENTIAL AREA UNCERTAINTIES

##### Issue

Due to a variety of factors — including the half-century age of structures, poor maintenance, critical shifts in population and wealth — much of the district's housing stock has deteriorated since World War II.

Problems are particularly acute in the Seven Streets and West Fens neighborhoods, where accelerated institutional expansion led to rampant real estate speculation in the sixties and early seventies. In better times, these neighborhoods housed more families than they do today, and property was owned by neighborhood residents or absentee owners interested in solid, long-term return on their investment. The neighborhoods' populations were more varied and balanced; landlords chose tenants carefully and maintained their property; and an overall feeling of stability and confidence was shared by owners and residents alike.

A number of changes have occurred within the last two decades to dramatically alter this situation. The mid-sixties saw the onset of Urban Renewal and the Christian Science Church Master Plan. Although these programs have created new housing, commercial and recreational facilities, the interim period has been characterized by demolition, loss of housing and commercial establishments, displacement of residents, torn-up streets and boarded-up buildings.



*Peterborough Housing under construction.*

The dramatic expansion of local institutions (particularly Northeastern University and Boston University) resulted in the loss of housing stock (as institutions bought up buildings within residential neighborhoods) and a new and expanded market for those housing units which remained. Property owners saw the opportunity to reap greater profits by catering to the increased student population. Apartments were converted to smaller units, and rent levels were raised. Buildings became overcrowded, and the neighborhood population became less balanced and more transient; as more students moved into the neighborhood, more families moved out. Rents had risen while costs (maintenance, taxes, etc.) remained about the same; consequently the perceived value of many of these buildings increased significantly.

Property owners saw a chance to make an even greater profit by selling the buildings to outsiders. Many of the new owners were interested in making a large profit by turning the property over again quickly. Prices skyrocketed and real estate speculators made fortunes. Many buildings were mortgaged three or more times, but few of them were maintained. Then came the crunch.

Rent control and the market itself eventually placed a ceiling on rents; at the same time costs (including maintenance, financing, heating and taxes) rose.

Property was now in the hands of "operators," many of whom were completely unskilled at managing real estate. Years of negligence had deteriorated the buildings to the extent that major rehabilitation investment was necessary; yet owners found themselves with their backs against the wall — their equity had by this point become a negative value. Banks became very cautious about financing renovations or acquisitions. Eventually tenants organized themselves and began to demand much needed repairs; city inspectors began to appear in the neighborhoods, and landlords were cited with code violations. In some instances, the result has been vacant, boarded-up apartment buildings; in other instances, buildings were burned and tenants died in the fires.

Since 1973, the Symphony Road area was extremely hard hit by a series of suspicious fires. An investigation into the nature of those fires was undertaken by a local community group, the Symphony Tenants Organization Project (STOP). Their efforts led to a



full scale official investigation and the uncovering of the largest arson ring ever uncovered in the United States. A total of 33 persons, including high ranking police and fire officials and insurance brokers, were arrested in connection with the arson for profit ring. The efforts initiated by STOP have resulted in seven convictions (as of May 1978), the passage of State legislation relating to arson, the initiation of Federal programs to combat arson, the establishment of an Arson Task Force by the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Treasury Department and a federally funded \$200,000 grant for a special Massachusetts Task Force on Arson.

In other parts of the Fenway/Kenmore district, the housing situation is brighter and the problems which exist are more clear-cut. As mentioned before, about 70% of the residential buildings in the St. Botolph neighborhood have been rehabilitated through private financing. This area now has a strong, positive sense of neighborhood confidence and stability. City investment in trees and streetlights have bolstered this confidence; the housing market is strong here and the buildings are well maintained. The housing strategy at this point should be preservation, relying on the cooperation of local officials and a strong neighborhood organization, monitoring and guiding change through the Zoning Board of Appeal and less formal means.

The buildings on Bay State Road, outside of Kenmore Square, are generally well maintained and aesthetically pleasing. Rents are fairly high here, and the population is more stable than in some other of the district's neighborhoods. For years now, however, Boston University has been buying up buildings along the street; some long-term residents fear that their street will eventually become a part of the University's campus and that buildings once populated by families and individuals will be turned into offices and dormitories.

Outspoken residents working with the BRA through the Zoning Board of Appeal have been successful in stemming the tide to some extent. Although the City has no direct control over the purchase and sale of real estate, use of real estate is controlled

through the City's zoning code. As a result of pressure brought to bear on the University through the Zoning Board, B.U. has prepared a master plan, in compliance with the Mayor's Policy Statement on Medical and Educational Institutions, describing its expansion and development plans for the coming years. This plan, however, has yet to be accepted by the City and local residents. One of the City's most important objectives in this effort is to have Bay State Road strengthened and preserved as a stable, residential neighborhood.

### Strategy

Many activities are occurring in both the East and West Fens Areas which address the housing problems described above. These include provision of housing through subsidies for new construction and rehabilitation of existing units. Recently completed subsidized housing developments in the Seven Streets and St. Germain areas include: Church Park, Morville House, Burbank Gardens, Norway Housing, Burbank Apartments and 12 Stoneholm Street. Symphony Plaza East and West and St. Botolph Terrace Apartments are nearing completion. The Green House, a market rate apartment complex (Parcel 3) on Huntington Avenue, and the condominiums (Parcel 4) will be under construction in the near future.

A number of programs designed to spur housing rehabilitation are now underway within the urban renewal project and several are scheduled to be expanded to include other areas of the Fenway. The City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP) offers cash rebates equal to 20% of the value of housing code related repairs for owner-occupied, 1-6 unit buildings. Elderly owner-occupants are eligible for 50% rebates. Although this program is available throughout the Fenway, it has had limited impact because of the very few number of owner-occupied 1-6 unit buildings in the Fenway.

In 1978, a Housing Improvement Demonstration Program (\$200,000) was initiated to encourage owners of multi-unit buildings to undertake major repairs to utility systems, roofs, bathrooms and kitchens. The

program provides "Interest Reduction Grants" to area property owners by providing subsidies to the lender at the front end of the loan to effectively reduce the conventional interest rate. In order to use public funds more effectively and to encourage participation, this program will combine an Interest Reduction Grant with a FHA Title I loan which usually allows for a 12 year repayment period. The City has, however, received FHA approval to extend the term to 15 years. The program is currently available within the urban renewal project and is administered by FenPAC and the Mayor's Office of Housing. It is proposed that the program be refunded and made available throughout the Fenway.

The Fenway is also the focus of a Section 312 Multi-family Demonstration Project. Through this program, Symphony Area Renaissance, Inc. (SARI), a local community development corporation, will acquire vacant city-owned buildings on Symphony Road and rehabilitate them using Section 312, 3% interest loans. The properties comprise a total of 20 units with the average rehab cost projected at \$18,500 per unit. The program has received \$400,000 in 1978 CDBG funds. When rehabilitated, SARI will market and manage the units as rental apartments to moderate income families in the Fenway.

A Community Land Trust (CLT) was formed and funded by CDBG in 1979. The CLT will be an umbrella organization consisting of the three existing Fenway Community Development Corporations (Fenway Tenants Development Corporation, Fenway Community Development Corporation and Symphony Area Renaissance, Inc.) and the Project Area Committee (FenPAC). The CLT will acquire property using CDBG funds and will dispose of that property for purposes deemed in the best interest of the community. The initial CDBG funding will allow the CLT to acquire buildings which will be rehabilitated for low and moderate income housing. The CLT will be able to acquire property in both the East and West Fens and will have potential access for a wide range of funding sources including but not limited to CDBG funds.





*Kenmore Square.*

In addition to the above programs, the Section 8 housing program has been used quite extensively in the Fenway. This rental subsidy program has three formats: new construction, major rehabilitation, and existing. Under the first two forms, the subsidy actually goes to the developer/owner. The prevalence of developer subsidies may in the long run contribute to the current situation, where developers and lending institutions are unwilling to invest unless a subsidy is involved. Where the promise of subsidy goes unrealized, properties can be held in an unimproved and often uninhabited condition until the subsidy is forthcoming. Thus the objective of encouraging responsible investment may actually be thwarted.

The "existing" component of the Section 8 program is a variation on the basic housing allowance concept, where the subsidy goes directly to the tenant, who is then free to find decent housing wherever he or she desires. The theoretical disadvantages to this program are that it may take longer for good units to be produced in a given area, and in the meantime the subsidized tenants may move outside the neighborhood. Efforts should be made to target "existing" Section 8 subsidies to specific neighborhoods not only to reduce displacement of existing tenants due to increased rents through rehabilitation but also to insure that a neighborhood is strength-

ened by encouraging tenants with subsidies to seek units in well managed/maintained structures in the immediate area.

The real disadvantage to the Section 8 program is that it is severely underfunded. City and Federal officials should work together to obtain additional funding and to evaluate placing more of Boston's Section 8 allocation through the "existing" component, which is by far the most promising of the three for the Fenway's housing problems.

## **B. COMMERCIAL AREAS**

### **1. Kenmore Square**

#### **Issue**

Changes in land use and the population throughout the district are reflected in the recent character of its commercial areas. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Kenmore Square, which has emerged as a youth-oriented retail and entertainment center. The Square has ceased to have a reputation for prime office space, hotels and stores; even its distinction as a key transportation exchange has diminished with auto congestion and inefficient Green Line MBTA service. Kenmore Square's most notable physical characteristics, its large hotels, have been converted in some instances to dormitories by Boston University and Graham Junior College. The underutilization, poor

maintenance and future uncertainty of the Graham buildings have had an area; if these properties go on the market, their reuse will be of major significance to the area.

Non-residential properties pose another problem. In upper stories of commercial structures, office space is experiencing high vacancy rates. On the lower levels, while long-term vacancies are not an issue, the mix of uses is, since it contributes to the Kenmore sub-area's lack of stability, diversification and aesthetic appeal. The range and quality of goods and services are geared almost exclusively to the tastes and incomes of the college-aged population. Fast-food establishments dominate the limited array; their signage and litter generation create much of the Square's atmosphere. The baseball games at nearby Fenway Park have other blighting effects, in the form of traffic and parking problems, crowds and litter.

In addition, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall is in poor condition, with the State air quality monitoring trailer adding to its disrepair near Deerfield Street. The MBTA Busway has divided the Square visually and has made pedestrian crossing more chaotic. Traffic continues to be a problem. Parking violators are not towed, sign code illegalities abound, and trash receptacles are inadequate to meet the area's needs.

#### **Strategy**

A comprehensive, visible program of rehabilitation is required to re-establish a sense of balance and character to this important and well-located commercial center. Both public and private investment and determination are necessary. Any public investment made in the Square is contingent upon the establishment of a strong local business organization and the exhibited willingness of those businesses to participate themselves through private investment. There have been business groups in Kenmore Square in the past; within the last year a new local group has been formed with the assistance (and promise of City support) of the Neighborhood Business District Program.



Basic to the improvement of Kenmore Square is the preparation of a comprehensive study and plan for the area geared toward introducing a more permanent, balanced population. A strong first step in this direction was made within the last year as Boston University, the Red Sox, local banks and other major interests in the Square sponsored a consultant study which assembled data, analyzed existing problems, and made recommendations to improve the Square's future development potential. A review process is currently being established by the BRA.

The City should take a series of actions to upgrade the area. A staged program of environmental improvements should be developed, involving the rehabilitation of the mall, street trees, new curbing, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, traffic flow (see Traffic and Parking section below), waste baskets, bicycle racks, benches, signage and lighting. These expenditures should be directed at improving the appearance — and thus the livability and economic viability — of Kenmore Square and recreating a sense of character for the area.

In 1977 the City recommended that the most dramatic short-range physical improvement, the rehabilitation of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, be included as a priority for the City's capital budget if significant support for joint public/private improvements in the Square is obtained and demonstrated. Secondly, enforcement of existing ordinances (zoning, parking, sign, sanitation) is another necessary step in upgrading the Square.

In the private domain, property owners and abutters must organize into a permanent, active, effective group. The merchants, in particular, should formulate a strategy that includes: (1) specifying needed public improvements; (2) emphasizing solidarity and the area's assets through promotional efforts, setting similar store hours and advertising together as a group; (3) pressuring retailers and restaurateurs to improve their facades, signs, maintenance, and the goods and services they offer; and (4) seeking to attract new enterprises and a broader range of uses, such as quality specialty boutiques or con-

dominiums or professional offices, to generate more and higher-grade business.

In addition to these actions, there may be major reuse or development opportunities there that could blend with upgrading and increasing residential and commercial uses in Kenmore Square.

## **2. Upper Boylston Street**

### **Issue**

The three-block portion of Boylston Street from the Fens to Brookline Avenue is an underutilized, auto-oriented commercial strip. Much of the land is occupied by one-story structures that are often vacant and by parking lots used to capacity only during the baseball season. Private reconstruction has taken place in a haphazard fashion and has not served to improve the street's appearance or to stabilize its economy. At night, the strip is deserted and dark; it has become a dangerous area.

Boylston Street's need for planned reuse is clear, but the precise nature of its rejuvenation has never been pursued to the point of an active, investor-backed proposal. One concept discussed by the BRA has involved the construction of new mixed-use structures (residential, with ground-floor retail) of 12 to 15 stories. A more recent tentative proposal, advanced by a group of Boylston Street property owners organized as the Fenway Boylston Improvement Association, emphasizes the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the area for medical ancillary purposes — technical supplies, sales offices, repair centers, and so on — in combination with residences.

Zoning changes for height and density would likely be necessary for any major, intensive redevelopment of Boylston Street. Thus the reuse becomes a matter of public policy. It is also a matter of concern to the adjacent West Fens neighborhood, Boylston Street's need for planned reuse is clear but the precise nature

### **Strategy**

A rehabilitated upper Boylston Street, including new construction and new uses, would utilize more fully a section of prime real estate which has undergone little improvement. The

residential component of such redevelopment would be critical. It must be viewed as an opportunity to reinforce the residential character of the West Fens area by providing some low- and moderate-income housing for small households, the elderly and young working people; at the same time, it might offer a way to diversify and stabilize the area by creating housing for larger families and higher-income people as well. Given the amount of potential redevelopment and the difficulties to date in preserving the West Fens neighborhood, both the City and the existing residential community must be brought into the planning process with property owners to help determine the scale and nature of Boylston Street's reuse.

## **C. OPEN SPACE IMPROVEMENT AND ACCESS**

### **Issue**

Fenway-Kenmore is rich in open space, notably the Olmsted legacies of the Back Bay Fens and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, which together account for about 15% of the district's total area. Both facilities, however, have deteriorated physically and have become increasingly inaccessible because of automobile traffic and parking. In the case of the Fens, a further hazard is now the park's use and reputation as a place of criminal activity. The condition of these substantial open spaces has rendered them of minimal use to the immediate community and to the City as a whole.

### **Strategy**

Most of the open space needs of the district could be met through existing facilities if major efforts were exerted in replanning, capital investment, repair and the coordination of City and regional agencies. Although City and MDC improvements have been made in the last few years, this is only a start to upgrading the park. The Fens must be re-examined and a plan for its future devised. Perhaps the most significant recent investment in the Fens is the completion within the past year of a comprehensive plan for landscape restoration. The plan has been reviewed and accepted by the community. The critical Westland Avenue entrance to the Fens will be



*Commonwealth Avenue Mall.*

improved through a grant from the Brown Fund. The first step toward implementation has been taken and now \$150,000 of City and Federal monies are being spent on improvements to the Fenway's northeastern section with an additional \$385,000 scheduled in FY 1980.

The section of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall located in the district is also in need of public investment to restore its appearance and usefulness as open space. From Charlesgate West to Kenmore Street, the Mall requires landscaping — including trees, bushes, grass, fencing, lights, hard surface, curbing, benches and trash receptacles. An application was filed in 1978 to fund these improvements through the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Services which replaced the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

Finally, in addition to upgrading and assuring safe access to these two major open space resources, the City should investigate the need for special facilities, particularly for children and the elderly, within residential sections. In 1978 the BRA spent \$5,000 on improvements to the Edgerly Road Playground, which is maintained by local residents and is one of the few facilities for children in the neighborhood. The City should continue to work with Boston University and the Christian Science Church in planning and implementing park contributions and encourage other area institutions to make similar improvements. The City and community also ought to seek neighborhood access to institutionally owned parks, such as that of the Harvard School of Public Health

in the West Fens area. Finally, planning should begin for a system of pedestrian walkways and bikeways throughout the district, including better linkage to the Esplanade along the Charles River.

#### **D. DISPOSITION OF URBAN RENEWAL PARCELS**

##### **Issue**

The Fenway Urban Renewal Plan, because of its initial emphasis on demolition and redevelopment to achieve a new image, became a heated controversy in the early 1970's. A citizens' lawsuit delayed renewal activity until the formation of FenPAC, a community group with advisory powers to the Boston Redevelopment Authority. With increased sensitivity to the wishes of present residents and with a diminished potential for federal renewal monies, the project now is concentrating on improvements to current residential and commercial areas as well as on the redevelopment or rehabilitation of key remaining disposition parcels.

##### **Strategy**

FenPAC, whose contract was re-funded this year by the BRA, has proved to be an essential element in planning for the eastern half of the Fenway. Committee members are elected by the neighborhood and, with the assistance of a professional planner/administrator, hold regular meetings and occasional hearings, reviewing and advising the BRA and City agencies on a wide scope of issues ranging from change in street directions to major development proposals. FenPAC works well with

neighborhood groups and local officials and has helped to insure that changes slated for the neighborhood are well designed and executed in a timely manner. The BRA and the City will continue to rely on FenPAC for guidance and assistance on issues affecting the Fenway, including the future of Parcels 3, 4, 7, 12, and 13.

**Parcel 3** — the Christian Science Church, owner of the land, and a private developer have submitted a proposal to construct 302 market rent apartments on the parcel between the Colonnade Hotel and the Midtown Motor Inn on Huntington Avenue. The proposed development of the Green House has been approved by FenPAC and the St. Botolph Citizens' Association. The developer is currently firming up a financial commitment and is seeking a 121A Tax Agreement. Construction is anticipated in the near future.

**Parcel 4** — The site of the former Charles C. Perkins School was publicly offered for development of housing by the Public Facilities Department. Eleven proposals were submitted, most of which proposed to construct market rate housing on the site. Graham Gund Associates, Inc. has been designated as developer. Their proposal was for sixteen condominium units. Construction is scheduled to begin in June 1979.

**Parcel 7** — The structures located at 351-367 Mass. Ave. will be rehabilitated by the developer, Ken Guscott Associates. The developer is working out financing through MHFA and has received preliminary approval for 54 units of Section 8 housing and is seeking a 121A Tax Agreement.

**Parcel 12** — The BRA will not continue to acquire and demolish the structures between Massachusetts Avenue and Edgerly Road from Church Park to Haviland Street, as originally planned. Efforts are now focused on the renovation of these structures. The BRA should convey its properties for rehabilitation and assist owners in storefront renovation by providing urban design and financing assistance. The use of low interest (312) loans should be explored.





*Perkins School.*

**Parcel 13** is at the corner of Boylston Street and Massachusetts Avenue, extending to Edgerly Road and Hemenway Street. BRA and neighborhood analysis have determined that rehabilitation rather than new construction is more appropriate and feasible. Hamilton Realty Trust, the designated developer, will rehabilitate the properties for commercial uses on the ground floor, and artists studios and apartments on the upper floors. The Suffolk Franklin Savings Bank is now renovating the structures on the corner for a new bank, offices and apartments. Boylston and Haviland Streets will be redesigned to improve their appearance and to act as an incentive to attract new private investment.

## E. TRAFFIC AND PARKING

### Issue

The heavy traffic volumes and circulation and parking problems in Fenway-Kenmore affect not only drivers and pedestrians but also the district's air quality, noise levels and open space facilities. The situation is most obvious at morning and evening commuter peak periods and when Red Sox games are being played at Fenway Park. Local streets as well as major roadways sometimes become impassable, and on game days virtually all available space — including the Back Bay Fens and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall — is converted to parking use, legal or not. Even without the impact of Fenway Park, more cars than desirable park on interior streets in the Peterborough and Fenway subareas. Congestion and pedestrian hazards occur regularly in Kenmore Square and on major arterials (Massachusetts, Huntington and Brookline Avenues), where medical and educational institutions contribute to traffic and parking demands.

The roadway immediately surrounding the Fens — Park Drive, the Fenway and Agassiz Road — presents special problems. It has become a carrier of heavy, fast-moving, constant through traffic. As a result, pedestrian access to the park has become difficult and dangerous. In some cases, walk lights simply do not exist; in other locations, they have been left unactivated, are poorly synchronized for safe crossing or are flouted by drivers.

In Kenmore Square, the inherent difficulties of pedestrians and motorists sharing a complicated traffic interchange have been exacerbated by the MBTA's ground-level location of its bus terminal and by the inability of the underpass to attract pedestrian crossings. The Square has one of the highest intersectional accident totals in Massachusetts. Because of the amount of traffic passing through and nearby on the Massachusetts Turnpike and Storrow Drive, it also has noise and air pollution problems among the worst in the State.

### Strategy

Additional expenditures and coordination among concerned public agencies are needed for further traffic and parking improvements in the district. An attempt to implement such coordination was begun by the BRA through a comprehensive circulation, pedestrian access and land use study of the area surrounding the Fens, with FenPAC and MDC officials. As a result, MDC is about to alter circulation patterns using existing streets in and around the Fens on an experimental basis. More mutual assistance and planning are needed in the future and should include the MBTA so that public transit is properly assessed as part of the solution to traffic and parking problems.

The completion of the initial phases of the TOPICS program, designed to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety on Massachusetts, Commonwealth and Huntington Avenues, will help alleviate some problems. The traffic control portion of the Massachusetts Avenue project and the pedestrian, traffic and aesthetic improvements on Commonwealth Avenue from B.U. Bridge to Kenmore Square and Phase I of the

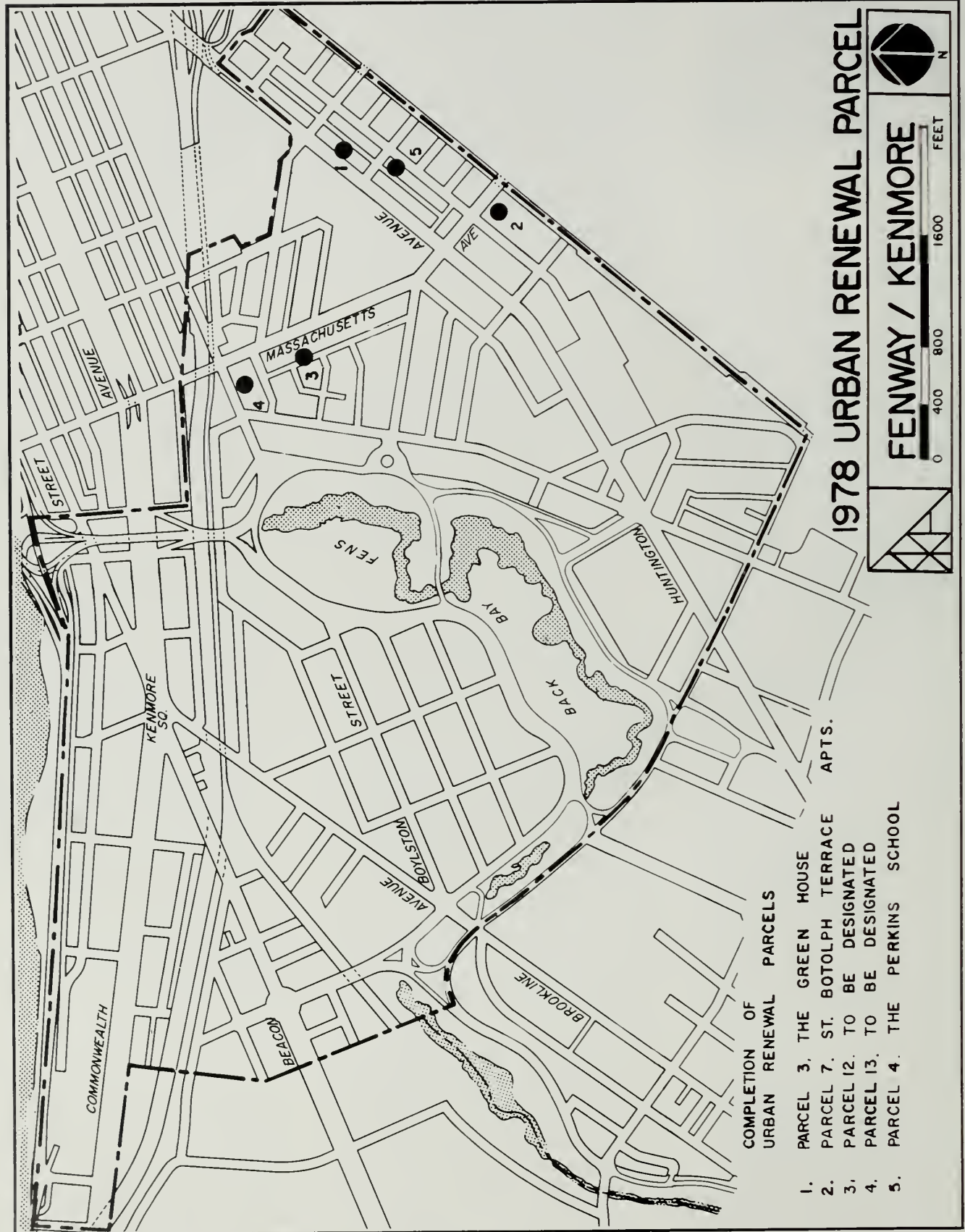
Huntington Avenue project are completed.

The extensive improvements for Kenmore Square proposed by the BRA have not proceeded further because of funding restrictions. Among the key elements that need to be considered in improving traffic and pedestrian conditions in the Square are circulation pattern changes, relocation of the taxi stand, enforcement of parking regulations and turning movements, new neckdowns, the reduction or removal of bus traffic at street level, improved signage and pedestrian walkways. Further exploration of the feasibility of building a parking garage for the area — perhaps as a joint effort by the Red Sox, Boston University and other major users — would not only improve conditions during the baseball season but also would provide parking for commercial and professional uses in and near the Square.

In the interim, the creation of shuttle bus service to available parking areas (such as the Southwest Corridor clearing) or the restriction of existing parking lots to buses to discourage patrons from driving to games should be considered. The City and MDC also must intensify their ticketing and towing efforts to make the Red Sox and their customers more aware of the safety hazards and inconvenience they impose. Finally, the development of a resident sticker program would help address this and other area parking problems, including those created by Northeastern, Boston University and the medical complex, and double-parked cars in commercial areas and on arterials.

In the case of the area immediately surrounding the Fens, coordination is needed in the review and implementation of further traffic direction and capacity changes to assure a reduction of the impact of automobiles on the park. The BRA's Park-Pass proposal, designed to alleviate traffic congestion and pedestrian hazards around the Fens, is being carefully reviewed by area residents and the MDC. With community support and appropriate revision, the proposal could conceivably be implemented within the next few years. Parking policies also need to be clarified and then enforced.







*Northeastern University.*

## **F. INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION**

### **Issue**

Fenway-Kenmore contains a large concentration of educational and other institutions. While these are in many ways assets to the City, they also have serious negative impacts, particularly on nearby residential sections. The inherent conflicts between institutional and neighborhood uses have been exacerbated by rapid, uncontrolled expansion of Northeastern University, Boston University and others over the past two decades. The resultant problems include excessive demands on City services, roadway and parking capacities; changes in the size and character of the housing stock; residential blight from the impacts of illegal quartering, building conversions, noise, poor maintenance and transiency; the non-taxability of property; incompatible land uses; and obsolete or underutilized buildings and facilities.

### **Strategy**

Policy guidance and coordination can encourage more orderly growth and consolidation of institutions and can minimize the undesirable effects of their presence. The City's major tool is review of land use, density and design through the zoning code and appeal process. Two zoning amendments were proposed by FenPAC; one has been approved and one was not adopted by the Zoning Commission. The new zoning amendment established a special institutional overlay district for the East Fens, West Fens and St. Botolph areas of the Fenway. As a result of this amendment, all institutional uses within this overlay district were made conditional uses. Thus, any change in

an existing conditional use or the establishment of a new conditional use must apply to the Board of Appeal for a variance (see Board of Appeal process in Appendix). This amendment applies to all private elementary and secondary schools, libraries, museums, adult education centers, certain sports facilities, nursing homes and private clubs. The overlay change offers the community and the City new input into non-medical institutional planning decisions in the Fenway.

The second proposed amendment pertaining to hospital and related uses was not adopted by the Zoning Commission. This amendment would have made currently allowed uses conditional citywide thereby requiring a public hearing.

The City already exercises some measure of control over medical and educational institutions through the Mayor's policy statement of September 1970 to "assure that such development is in the best interests of both the immediate neighborhood and the City." Based on this policy statement, the City should require that any future land use changes or building conversions by educational institutions be accompanied by a master plan agreed on by the school and the City prior to the approval of zoning variances and licensing requests.

Generally, these institutions should not encroach into residential areas; should provide for a reasonable proportion of the housing, parking and transportation needs of their students; should make payments to the City sufficient to support the municipal services they require; should provide and promote programs and facilities to adjacent residential communities; and should improve the appearance of their physical plants and make open space amenities available to the public. Finally, if any of the schools move or close, the City must take the initiative in seeing that the released land and buildings are reused so as to improve the residential quality and stability of the district.

Major progress was evidenced this year by the creation of a memorandum of agreement between FenPAC and Northeastern University. Under the terms of this agreement, Northeastern will seek FenPAC's review and approval before acquiring, converting, occupying or divesting itself of property within or adjacent to the mutually-defined neighborhood area. Northeastern also made strides this year toward the successful completion of a master plan. Boston University is just now beginning its master planning process.

## **G. HUMAN SERVICES**

### **Issue**

Because of the composition of the Fenway-Kenmore population, there is a need for a variety of human services. The area is home to an unusually high proportion of people who live alone and without nearby family ties, and who because of these and other factors (age, poor nutrition, psychological alienation, declining employment opportunities, inadequate living conditions) require a wide range of accessible, inexpensive services. The needs of the elderly, comprising 11% of the district population, are particularly acute because of fixed income and declining health.

### **Strategy**

In 1976, the City has responded by funding a minibus for elderly transportation and an elderly outreach program (Area II Home Care). These programs should continue to be funded, and the City should continually monitor service needs in Fenway-Kenmore and offer assistance to the community groups in planning and securing funding for programs and facilities. It is important to note, however, that there are very strict regulations governing the expenditure of CDBG money for social programs. The block grant is intended to fund "brick and mortar" projects; to be funded, human service programs must directly and specifically support capital investment in the area and must have been refused financial assistance from other sources. City funding for social programs should be viewed as a last resort.



## IV. Summary of Proposed Three-Year Improvement Program (1979-1981)

The proposed three-year improvement program for Fenway-Kenmore is designed to upgrade and preserve the area's residential neighborhoods, commercial centers and recreational resources. A combination of public investment, private investment and public policy is needed.

Program recommendations were made assuming the continuation of recent funding levels. Citywide efforts must be made, however, to improve funding levels through increased Federal, State and local aid. The City faces tremendous burdens based on the uncertainty of the municipal bond market, the inequitable tax structure in Massachusetts, and cutbacks at the State and Federal levels. Because of the scarcity of available funds, the City must continue to utilize a variety of resources to coordinate neighborhood preservation efforts and to maximize the leveraging of private investment.

### A. HOUSING

Preservation and improvement of the district's housing requires strong public policy and substantial public and private investment. The basic strategy is three-fold: (1) to gain control over immediate problems (fires and housing disinvestment, unchecked institutional expansion), (2) to encourage responsible investment, and (3) to establish and maintain neighborhood confidence and stability. More specifically, the City should:

1. Continue the multi-unit Housing Improvement Program.
2. Continue the Section 312 loan and HIP programs.
3. Continue efforts, through changes in the zoning code, to reduce the conversion of residential property to institutional uses.
4. Continue efforts to reduce, through legislation, the use of fire insurance as a disinvestment mechanism of "last resort."
5. Constantly monitor housing market conditions to assess the effect of tax assessment and abatement policies and rent control.

6. Constantly monitor city service delivery to ensure a quality residential environment.

7. Target Federal rehabilitation subsidies to assist lower income residents in danger of dislocation due to renovations at higher rents and also to promote the rehabilitation of units in poor market areas.

8. Support and provide technical assistance to the Community Land Trust.

### B. COMMERCIAL AREAS

#### 1. Kenmore Square Revitalization Plan

In the next three years a consensus plan should be developed and implementation begun through public/private cooperation. A planning process is in its initial stages with local residents, business people and the BRA, as the City's planning agency.

Upgrading Kenmore Square should involve the re-landscaping of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, new street furniture and pedestrian amenities, a study of the traffic, parking and pedestrian access problems, enforcement of the sign code and detailed assessment of new development concepts, particularly for residential uses.

Adjacent to the Fens and mall, traffic and parking problems must be investigated and improvements begun. Similar studies and improvements must be continued or initiated for Kenmore Square, major arterials and the particular difficulties created by the Red Sox games.

#### 2. Upper Boylston Street

A planning study should be undertaken by the BRA, local residents and business people to detail future land use concepts for the area and the steps necessary to realize an improvement program.

The street is now a jumble of low intensity uses but has potential for new development which could include residential, office and commercial uses. The proximity of the area to the Medical Area, the Fenway institutional area, and Fenway Park makes it suitable for an improvement program for higher intensity uses.

The appropriate reuse of Boylston Street could require future City investment for land acquisition and infrastructure. Whether large-scale reconstruction or chiefly rehabilitation is involved, the street will require substantial improvements, including sewer and water works, street and sidewalk repair, trees, lights and street furniture.

### C. OPEN SPACE/RECREATION

In the next three years, the renovation of the Commonwealth Avenue Mall should be completed. The historic lighting now on lower Commonwealth Avenue should be extended through the Charlesgate West area to the beginning of Kenmore Square.

Improvements in the district's open spaces and their accessibility must involve investments in the Fens and mall facilities. A study of additional needs in open space for residents — particularly the elderly and young children — should be made and new smaller parks provided if warranted.

In 1977-1978, the BRA and the Parks and Recreation Department completed a joint review of existing open space facilities and needs and will recommend future improvement programs to be undertaken by the City, the State (MDC) as well as large institutions (universities, churches, etc.).

### D. FENWAY URBAN RENEWAL PLAN COMPLETION

#### Major Projects

1. New housing on Parcel 3 (between Colonnade Hotel and Midtown Motor Inn) — design review ongoing.
2. Rehabilitation proposals for Parcels 7, 12 and 13 are in various stages of implementation. In conjunction with Parcels 12 and 13, improvement programs for existing storefronts and the portions of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street adjacent to these sites must be undertaken and implementation measures funded.

## E. THREE-YEAR PROGRAM SUMMARY TABLE

Issue	Strategy	1978 Investment Program	Proposed 1979-1981 Neighborhood Improvement Program Activities
Residential Area Uncertainties	Gain control over immediate problems (unchecked institutional expansion; fires & housing disinvestment).	Guide changes in institutional use of property through zoning & Mayor's Policy Statement in medical & educational institutions. Effort to revise fire insurance policy.	Continue ongoing efforts with neighborhood cooperation.
	Encourage responsible investment.	Availability of federal low interest (312) loans. Evaluation of vacancy decontrol. Evaluation of current rehabilitation incentives and their effectiveness.	Continue ongoing efforts.  Availability of 312 loans & Housing Improvement Program Rebates. Increase Section 8 assistance directly to tenants ("Existing Housing" Program component); investor owner counseling. Revise assessing and abatement policies and procedures.
	Establish & maintain neighborhood confidence & stability through capital improvements and improved city maintenance & service delivery.	Urban Renewal Project street & alley reconstruction; street lighting; tree planting; rehabilitation of open space; footpatrol; elderly van.	Necessary public improvements (Fens restoration); continue (footpatrol, elderly van) & improve city maintenance and service delivery.
Kenmore Square Revitalization	Organization of active civic group.	Technical assistance from City through Neighborhood Business District and Neighborhood Planning Programs.	Continued technical assistance from the City.
	Code enforcement (signs, parking, zoning, sanitary); advise merchants on improved signage and facade treatment.	Organize series of meetings on Kenmore Square (BRA).	Coordinated effort among civic group, BRA, LCH, Building Department, Parks Department & Police; inspection and prosecution of violators.
	Improve image of Square through public improvements.	Rehabilitation of Commonwealth Avenue Mall.	Sidewalk reconstruction; bike racks, other pedestrian amenities.
	Short-term low-cost circulation & safety improvements (e.g., better vehicular signage, relocate taxi stand, reduce parking meter intervals).		
Open Space Improvement & Access	Rehabilitation of Back Bay Fens & improvement of access.	Fens Restoration Phase II.	Substantial, staged investment to restore and maintain Fens, according to master plan with MDC; implement vehicular & pedestrian circulation improvements (Park Pass).
	Rehabilitation of Commonwealth Avenue Mall.		Towing of parked cars; improved maintenance program.
	Development of other open space areas.	BRA improvements — Symphony Road — Open Space.	Analyze additional open space needs and opportunities (BRA/Parks Department).
Disposition of Urban Renewal Parcels	Development of remaining disposition parcels.	Site preparation work; ongoing reuse studies and reviews for Parcels 3, 7, 12 and 13.	With FenPAC, plan disposition and development of remaining parcels; additional site prep work and rehabilitation.
Boylston Street Reuse	Redevelop upper Boylston Street.	Encourage local planning process with residents, businesses and BRA.	Prepare development guidelines; street and sidewalk improvements; financing for land acquisition or write-down (as required by development program).



Issue	Strategy	1978 Investment Program	Proposed 1979-1981 Neighborhood Improvement Program Activities
Institutional Encroachment	Policy guidelines and coordination to minimize negative impacts and promote benefits to neighborhoods and city.	Work with Northeastern and Boston University on master planning efforts.	Continue joint planning efforts with N.U. and B.U.
Human Services	Assist in meeting community needs.	Elderly van - \$16,500.	City review of human service needs; continuation of ongoing program, further assistance as needed.

## V. Appendices

### A. 1975-1977 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM STATUS

Program	Budget Year	Status
Evans Park Landscaping	1975	Complete
Morville Park	1975	Complete
Street Lighting	1975-1977	Ongoing
Tree Planting	1975-1978	Ongoing
Elderly Van	1975-1978	Ongoing
Housing Improvement Program	1975-1978	Ongoing
Back Bay Fens Restoration Phase I	1976	Complete
Riverway Improvements	1976	Complete
Business District Amenities	1976	Complete
Elderly Outreach Program	1976	Ongoing
Footpatrol	1976-1978	Ongoing
Street Reconstruction	1977	Complete
Sidewalk Reconstruction	1977	Programmed
Interest Reduction Program	1978	Programmed
Exterior Code Enforcement	1978	Programmed
Back Bay Fens Restoration Phase II	1978	Programmed
Evans Park Lighting	1978	Programmed
Rose Garden Lighting	1978	Programmed

### B. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

#### 1. Introduction

The Fenway community is very active through its neighborhood organizations in affecting change within the communities. They convey neighborhood recommendations on specific issues to the appropriate agency, appear at zoning and licensing and commission hearings, propose zoning changes and through the architectural commissions insure the architectural quality and integrity of the exterior facades. The following describes a few of the active organizations in the neighborhood and city commissions and boards which regulate proposals which directly affect the neighborhoods.

#### 2. Zoning Commission

Zoning is a legal tool used to shape land use patterns and to regulate the scale of development within established boundaries. The zoning districts for the City of Boston are: Residential (S, R, H); Commercial (L, B) and Industrial (M, I and W). Fenway resident organizations have been active in proposing and supporting changes to the zoning code. A major amendment establishing an Institutional Overlay District was initiated by FenPAC.

The Zoning Commission consists of eleven commissioners appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. The Zoning Commission is responsible for the Zoning Code which establishes zoning regulations (Use Items) and zoning districts (maps) for the City of Boston. The Zoning Code may be amended by the Commission. The procedure for amending the Zoning Code is as follows.

#### a. Change of Zoning (Procedure A)

- (1) Proposed zoning change is presented to the BRA Board for approval.
- (2) BRA Board recommends change to the Zoning Commission.
- (3) Zoning Commission holds public hearing following advertisement and notification of appropriate parties.
- (4) Zoning Commission can pass measure with seven affirmative votes.
- (5) Ordinance goes to the Mayor.
- (6) Mayor can: (a) approve ordinance, (b) veto ordinance (Veto can be overridden with nine affirmative votes of the Zoning Commission), (c) take no action (this results in automatic passage after 15 days), or (d) return measure to Zoning Commission with recommendations.

#### b. Change of Zoning (Procedure B)

- (1) Citizen group request hearing before the Zoning Commission.
- (2) Zoning Commission asks BRA for recommendation.
- (3-6) Are the same as Procedure A.

Zoning text changes which are adopted are amendments to the Zoning Code of the City of Boston and as such regulate land use throughout the City and not just in the neighborhood. Zoning map changes, however, may be neighborhood specific.

#### 3. Zoning Board of Appeal

The Board of Appeal, a five member board appointed by the Mayor, is empowered to grant variances to the Zoning Code. A building permit cannot be issued for the construction or rehabilitation of any building which is in violation of the Zoning Code. Relief, in the form of a variance, from this regulation may be granted by the Board of Appeal. The procedure for obtaining a variance is as follows:

- a. Application for a building permit is filed.
- b. Permit is refused because a zoning or building code violation exists or will exist upon completion of proposed activity.
- c. Within forty-five days after such refusal an application for a variance is filed with the Board of Appeal (a filing fee is required).
- d. The BRA makes a recommendation to the Board of Appeal.
- e. A notice of a public hearing is published in the newspapers.
- f. The abutters are notified by mail.
- g. A public hearing is held.
- h. The Board of Appeal either grants a variance or denies the petition.

The community groups in the Fenway are very familiar with this process and are represented at nearly every Board of Appeal hearing which affects their communities.



#### 4. Licensing Board

The Licensing Board consists of three members, two appointed by the Mayor and one by the Governor to grant licenses, common victualer, beer and wine, full liquor licenses, entertainment licenses. The Fenway neighborhood is very concerned about restaurants and bars. As a result, their neighborhood organizations are aware of every proposal for new restaurants and bars and for changes in existing ones.

Common victualer's and wine and beer licenses are purchased or renewed for a fee annually in Boston. A public hearing is held prior to the initial granting of these licenses; in subsequent years a hearing is held only if one is requested, usually by local residents. In most cases there is only one hearing. There is no limit on the number of common victualer's and beer and wine licenses which can be granted by the Licensing Board. Because the licenses are obtained for a fee each year, they are not bought and sold by private parties or corporations, nor are they transferred from one address to another.

Full liquor licenses are another matter. Because there exists only a finite number of such licenses which can be held within the City, they are highly valued items which are bought and sold and which can be transferred among various owners and addresses. A public hearing is required when a liquor license is transferred to a new location, but not in cases where the ownership changes and the location remains.

#### 5. Fenway Project Area Committee (FenPAC)

The Fenway Project Area Committee (FenPAC) was established in 1973 to represent the Fenway community in the development issues related to the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan. FenPAC is an elected body of fifteen individuals living within the urban renewal area and two permanent salaried staff, an administrator and an administrative assistant. FenPAC is funded on a yearly basis through the Boston Redevelopment Authority

and works, under contract, with the BRA to advise on all Fenway planning matters under BRA jurisdiction. In recent years, FenPAC's scope has expanded beyond development proposals to include issues of broader community interest including housing, traffic planning, park restoration, zoning and institutional expansion issues. FenPAC has become an involved and effective advocate of the community with the many city agencies and civic groups effecting policy in the Fenway.

#### 6. Neighborhood Organizations

The following are a few of the neighborhood organizations which actively participate in the licensing, zoning, architectural commission and CDBG procedures: (1) St. Botolph Street Association; (2) St. Germain Street Association; and (3) Kenmore Area Council.

#### 7. Community Development Block Grant (CD) and Capital Budget (CB) Proposals

The CD program involves the distribution of Federal funds that come to the City with Federal requirements that certain neighborhood improvement activities and citizen participation be carried on under the program. The use of CD funds are primarily limited to housing, neighborhood improvements and public services in low and moderate income neighborhoods of the City. The preceding appendix lists programs that were funded in this neighborhood during the past three years from 1975 to 1977.

The City's annual Capital Budget (CB) is usually determined at the same time that the CD budget is formulated. The City raises CB funds by selling tax exempt long-term municipal bonds to private investors to fund capital improvements such as schools, public buildings, parks, streets, lighting and underground utilities.

The City's annual process for determining both the CD and CB budgets includes the following steps:

- a. An initial neighborhood hearing is held in each Little City Hall district to explain funding requirements for the program, report on the past year's projects and present the proposed neighborhood profiles (October or November).
- b. A second neighborhood hearing is held to receive and discuss neighborhood proposals for funding the next year (November or December).
- c. The Little City Hall Manager, Office of Program Development (OPD) Programmer and BRA Neighborhood Planner meet to review funding requests and prepare a proposed Neighborhood Improvement Plan (December and January).
- d. The proposed Neighborhood Improvement Plans are presented to the Mayor's Neighborhood Development Council (NDC) for approval. This group is chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Fiscal Affairs and includes two additional Deputy Mayors, the Mayor's Housing Advisor and Directors of the BRA, Office of Public Service and Office of Program Development (January or February).
- e. Upon approval by the NDC, the proposed Neighborhood Improvement Programs are submitted to the City Council for their review and approval (February or March).
- f. The City Council holds a series of neighborhood hearings on the proposed budgets. It then approves the budgets with amendments based on opinions voiced at the hearings (March or April).
- g. The Mayor reviews and approves the final Neighborhood Improvement Plans (April).
- h. The proposed CD application and budget is submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for its review and funding (May and June).
- i. The CD funds become available for spending (July 1st).

**CITY OF BOSTON**

Kevin H. White, *Mayor*

**BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Robert L. Farrell, *Chairman*

Joseph J. Walsh, *Vice Chairman*

James G. Colbert, *Treasurer*

James K. Flaherty, *Assistant Treasurer*

James E. Cofield, Jr., *Member*

Kane Simonian, *Secretary*

Robert J. Ryan, *Director*

**NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROGRAM**

Roy Bishop, *Director*

James Baecker, *Assistant Director*

William Marotta, *Fenway/Kenmore Planner*



